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S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

Parish-Church of *H*ANDILO,

IN THE

County of *R*ADNOR,

On *Tuesday* the 16th Day of *June*, being the Day of
Publick Thanksgiving for the Conclusion of a Just
and Honourable Peace, between Her most Excel-
lent Majesty the Queen of *Great-Britain*, and the
French King.

By *JAMES DAVIES*, Curate of the said Parish.

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L O N D O N :

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Psal. 85. ver. 8.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak: For he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints; but let them not turn again to Folly.

THis Psalm is of a mixt Nature, viz. Doctrine and Prayer. In the first Part the Psalmist (whoever he was, which is uncertain) petitions God to deliver the Church of the Jews from their present Calamity, by commemorating how graciously they had been before return'd by the Almighty from the Captivity of *Babylon*. In the other, he excites the People to attend their Duty towards God, and to lay aside their Complaints upon the Account of those Promises of Deliverance from their present Distress; which he foretelleth they should find in Jesus Christ. To this end he enjoyns them to a twofold Duty, first to depend upon the sweet and comfortable Promises of God the Lord, *For he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints*; secondly, not to debarr themselves of such incomparable Blessings by repeating those Offences, for which they were now chastised; *but let them not turn again to Folly*. How well the Wisdom of the Church hath inserted this Psalm into the Form of Thanksgiving for the present Occasion, is very visible in the Inference that so naturally redounds from my present Subject, *I will hear, &c.*

And that I may the better adapt the Words to my present Purpose, I will enquire,

1. What those Troubles and Distresses the Jews were at that time involv'd in, and which they are in the Text promis'd to be reliev'd from.

2. What that was which the Psalmist reproves in them, as the Cause of their then Misery; and consequently of the like Troubles upon any Church or Constituted People else.

3. What

3. What those comfortable Promises were, that were given them for their Encouragement to relinquish their former Errors.

Thus when I have made good what I promis'd, I shall infer something by way of Application; and so conclude.

1. What Troubles of the Jews the Text refers to, or when it befell them is not generally concluded; *some will have it to be the woefull times of † *Antiochus*, who most cruelly oppressed, persecuted and dissipated the Church of God: And that this Psalm was then dictated as consolatory to them in their afflicted and lamentable Circumstances. Others think that it befell them, after their Return from *Babylon*, about the Rebuilding of the Temple; which was interrupted by their Enemies, for the Space of forty six Years; viz. from the second or third Year after their Return, till the sixth Year of *Darius* Son of *Hystapis*: And this they ground by comparing, *Ezra* Cap. 4. ver. 2, &c. Cap. 6. ver. 2, &c. with the 2d Chap. of *St. John's* Gospel, ver. 20. But there's a third Opinion, that it was their Trouble concerning their Worship, and inhabiting in *Jerusalem*, after the Temple was finish'd; for such were the Incursions of their Enemies upon them, that tho' they had built the Temple, yet could they not manage their solemn Worship in quiet; nor dwell there in Peace, till they had compleated the Walls and Gates of the City. This Notion is grounded upon *Neh.* Cap. 1. &c. and is countenanced by some Modern Divines, because it is thought, there was no Psalm, nor any other Scripture written in the time of *Antiochus*: for *Malachi* the last Prophet and Writer of the old Testament, wrote his Prophecy a little before the end of the *Persian* Monarchy; compare his Prophecy with the last Chapters of *Nehemiah*.

Whatever then it was, it is very plain from the Text, that it was a Time of Tumult and Insurrection, a Time of Broils, either by forreign or intestine Wars; because the merciful Deliverance promis'd them is Peace, *I will hear what God the Lord will speak: For he will speak Peace*, &c. Peace being the only Mercy, that can come in Return of Discord, Sedition, or Faction. That it was no small Uneasiness in Church and State, is plain from the Psalmist's Allusion, ver. 1. *Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy Land: Thou hast brought back the Captivity of Jacob.* Which denotes this also refer'd to in the Text to be some signal Oppression by their Enemies, like, tho' not equal to the *Babylonish* Captivity. And having thus found their then Trouble, to be some such Commotion, it will be highly necessary to enquire into the Cause of it, which is my next Query, and is decyphered in the Text, by the reproachful Denomination of Folly.

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2. The Folly then meant here, was no doubt their Sins in general, as appears from the Psalmist's alluding Plea, ver. 2. *Thou hast forgiven the Iniquity of thy People: Thou hast covered all their Sin.* That Sin indeed is a Folly, Oh the exceeding Foolishness of it! Nothing is more palpable, as may be induc'd both from Scripture and Reason, such a Folly, that is the Source and Original of all our Jarrs, and Contentions, Strife and Discord. *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members?* Jam. 4. 1.

Besides, Sin in general, it is observ'd that particular Offences, bring upon a Nation or People particular Judgments. And Expositors tell us, there was something here, some more remarkable Folly. That Idolatry, or some such Abomination was crept into the Church at that time, either by the Influence of *Antiochus*, or some other way. We find an expositulating Paragraph, in the History of *Flavus Josephus*, upbraiding the Jews of their Sins in general, but particularly of their Ambition, Sedition and Faction, as the Cause of God's permitting the Romans, to come upon them, and subdue them. The Words run thus, "From what Epocha can we date our slavery, but from our own Seditions; when the Factions of *Aristobulus* and *Hyrchanus*, in the Heat of Ambition, whether should get uppermost, brought *Pompey* into the City, and made the Jews Slaves to the Romans? We are none of us ignorant what became of *Antigonus* the Son of *Aristobulus*, under whose Government, the Jews were punish'd with a second judicial Captivity, for the People's Sins. Did not *Herod* besiege *Jerusalem*, with the Assistance of *Socius* a Roman General; and after six Months reduce and rife the Place, as a just Judgment from Heaven, for the Iniquities of the Jews?"

Ambition and Covetousness are, and ever have been, in all Ages principal Sticklers in all Distractions of the Church. And we have had heretofore in our own, a particular *Instance; which I shall repeat in the Words of a true Church-man, and a learned Writer. "With what unfatiable Covetousness (saith he) the Possessions, Lands and Jurisdictions of the Bishops were gaped after, not by Lay Brethren only, but by the Presbyters and Ministers of the Church also: And as he in *Plutarch*, seeing his own Name unexpectedly among the Postscripts, and consequently expecting some sudden Death, cries out aloud, that it was his fine Gardens, and his Country House which brought that fatal end upon him; so might the Bishops also say, that it was their fair Houses, and their goodly Mannors, which expos'd them to the com-

* In the Beginning of Queen Elizabeth's Reign.

“ **men Envy, and in the Conclusion sacrificed them to Spoil and Rapine;** tho’ a Zeal to God’s Glory, the Purity of the Ordinances, and the Church’s Peace were the Pretences, yet (as *Cambden* well observes) it was the Churches Goods, not its Good, they most gaped after ; and to this they were supported and animated by their Lay Patrons ; Many of which (as some of the Scottish Writers say of theirs) would have crucified Christ himself to have had his Garments.

From what hath been said we may reasonably induce, that Sin in general, but especially that of Heresy and Schism, Ambition and Covetousness are reprov’d in the Text, as the Cause of Misery and Trouble to any Church and State : And as these ordinarily, breed Strife and Animosities ; which consequently end in Wars and Distresses ; so to be free from such, is highly encourag’d by the Text, to be unto them, the ready way to obtain most eminent Blessings both Spiritual and Temporal, and what they are, I am next to shew, which is my third and last General.

3. The Mercies promis’d in return of the Distresses the Jewish Church was then in, we find is implied in the Word Peace. *He shall speak Peace, &c.* And this is twofold, either the external and temporal Peace of the Church, or the inward and spiritual Peace of her Saints.

First, there’s promis’d a Deliverance from their present Troubles, and Sorrow, and instead, or in Return thereof, all Confluences of Prosperity, in the right Establishing and Constituting of a Church and People ; and to this Purpose, is that mystical Prediction of the Prophet *Daniel* thought to be, viz. *And he said unto me, unto two Thousand and three Hundred Days ; then shall the Sanctuary be cleansed,* Dan. 8. 14. That this Peace was to consist in all outward Blessings, insomuch that their Land should afford store and plenty of all things usefull for it’s Inhabitants, appears likewise from ver. 12 of this Psalm ; *Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good ; and our Land shall yield her Increase.*

2. As to the inward Peace and Consolation of the Church, whereby (according to Divines) is meant, that incredible, and most instant Joy of Mind, when we are freely set at Liberty, from all the Terrours of Conscience, and fully persuaded off, or thoroughly possess’d with the Favour of God ; solacing and comforting our Hearts within us : This Peace is really and truly the Issues of Faith, and has a twofold Tendency, either as it relates to the many and sundry Mercies, exhibited to us by the Vertue of God’s Truth, and our Faith, viz. the Mercy

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of God, receiv'd by the Faith of Man, and this is signified by those Words in the 10th verse of this Psalm. *Mercy and Truth are met together: Or else God's Righteousness working Peace in Man, which is shew'd in those divine and heavenly Embraces in the same verse. Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.* This internal Consolation intimated in the Text, is likewise mentioned by St. Paul to the Romans: *Therefore (saith he) being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Cap. 5. 1.* And, Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us: And afterwards, *For if when we were Enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the Death of his Son; much more being reconcil'd we shall be saved by his Life; and not only so, but we also joy in God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now receiv'd the Atonement. ver. 10, 11.*

And now having thus dispatch'd, the several Topicks contain'd in my Premises, I will hasten to make some applicable Inference from the whole, and so conclude.

And to this end let us consider the Peace spoken to our selves, in this great Nation wherein we dwell, our Deliverance not only from great and apparent Dangers, from an expensive and bloody War, wherein we have been actually engaged for above the space of twenty Years; but also from intestine Heats and Distractions, a Confusion to both Church and State, by a seasonable, happy and blessed Uniting of the several Kingdoms now comprehended by the Name of *Great Britain*, under her most sacred Majesty, whom God grant long to reign.

This happy Conclusion of Peace, restored us now at last, seems to challenge to it self, that Primary, and full Accomplishment of it in Christ's Kingdom here on Earth, so that we may say in the Words of the Prophet: *That the Mountain of the House of the Lord shall be established in the Top of the Mountains, and it shall be exalted above the Hills, and People shall flow into it.** The Manifestation of the Gospel is so diffus'd *Mic. 4. 1. amongst us, that we may further say with the same Prophet, *And many Nations shall come and say, come and let's go up to the Mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths; for the Law shall go forth out of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Our Rest and Quiet makes good likewise that ver. 3. &c. *And he shall judge among many People, and rebuke strong Nations afar off, and they shall beat their Swords into Plow-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-Hooks: Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more, but they shall sit every Man under his*

his Vine, and under his Fig-Tree, and none shall make them afraid; for all People will walk every one in the Name of his God; and I wish the Time may be now accomplish'd that we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. Thus then the Text,) *I will hear what God the Lord will speak: For he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints; but let them not turn again to Folly.*

Let us not turn again to the Folly of our Rebellion and Disobedience, for which we have paid so dear; and may the Bitterness of Wrath be past; may all the Blood that was shed in the late War, and the Treasure that was expended, have fully expiated our Guilt, and attoned for our Folly.

Let us not turn again to, but rather turn from our Faction and Schism. We know of whom it is spoken that they had as many Gods as Cities. Our Sects, nay our heretical Opinions have quite outdone the Number; for what a Train have we of Deists, Libertines, Antiscripturians, Unitarians, Socinians, and I know not what, yea, mere Atheists, such evil Spirits as Hell can't produce the like? Yet such we have, and there are reasons too obvious, that we may in a great Measure be charg'd with the Growth of it; for what greater Arguments can they find; than the private Interests of Men under Pretence of Religion; the wide Passage, that lies between the Faith, and lives of those who pretend to be Christians?

It must indeed be confess'd, that nothing seems more strange and unaccountable, than that the Practice of the unquestionable Duties of Christianity, should be put out of Countenance or slighted, not only by those who own and profess it, but also by them that contend for, and maintain the Principles of it. And to argue in the Words of the

† Great and Learned: " Can the Profession (will an Atheist say,) of
" that be honourable, whose Practice is not? For if the Principles be
" true, why are they not practis'd? If they be not true, why are they
" professed? But I will answer again, in his Words, That it is no
" Argument that there are no true Men in the World, because there
" are so many Apes which imitate them; or that there are no Jewels,
" because there are so many Counterfeits. And blessed be God, our
" Age is not quite barren of Instances of real Goodness, and unaffected
" Piety; there being some such generous Souls, as dare love Religion,
" without the Dowry of Interest, and manifest their Affections to it,
" in the plain Dress of the Scriptures, without the Paint and Set-offs,
" which are added to it by the several contending Parties of the Chri-
" stian World. But to return to our beloved Peace, And,

† Dr. Stil-
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As the Establishment of it doth morally beget Plenty, so let not our ease and abundance (like Brutes) tempt us to Pride and Wantonness; lest instead of Mercy we find Judgment, and instead of Blessing we find a Curse. We read that a long Peace and Prosperity having somewhat corrupted the primitive Christians, brought upon them the tenth Persecution, and as it was the last, so the fiercest, like the Efforts of a dying Enemy, that summons all his Strength to give the parting Blow. Thus the Almighty thought fit to purge and winnow the Rubbish and the Chaff: The Ulcer began to putrefie, and it was time to call for the Knife and the Caustick: The Application is natural, and highly concerns us as secure as ever we are; for if we persist in the Evil of our Ways, our Stubborness and Disobedience, our Prophaneness and Immorality, besure God hath not spent all his Artillery, he hath more Thunderboits in store for a perverse and stiff-necked People. The Demoniak in the Gospel, being repossessed, his last State was worse than the first; so we being brought into our right Mind again, let's not return to our usual Folly.

No State nor Condition can please a murmuring and gainsaying People, no not Peace it self, the greatest Blessing that Heaven can bestow, will satisfie the lewd, corrupt and vicious Age we live in, who regard nothing less, than that they were all listed, or needs must be under Christ's Banner, the Prince of Peace, who not only hath left his Peace with his Subjects, *John 5.* but also hath commanded us to love one another, and given us such sublime Precepts, as resist not Evil. *Revenge not; but give Place to Wrath.* Our Warfare is Spiritual, and therefore we are exhorted to put on the whole Armour of God, with which the primitive Christians subdued the greatest Monarchs; and propagated the Religion of their Lord and Master. *St. Peter* is commanded to put his Sword into his Sheath, and we are enjoyned to love our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us and despitefully use us.

To begin a War in Cases of Necessity, and upon good Grounds, is both warrantable and allowed by the Tenure of God's Laws and Discipline, but it argues, a truly Christian and primitive Piety when Kings and Princes seem not so tenacious of their Rights and Dignities, as of preserving the Peace of *Jerusalem*, of not spilling the Blood of those, whom Christ redeemed with his own, bereave Parents of their

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Children,

Children, make disconsolate Wives and distressed Orphans; in a Word, confound Church and State, extinguish Justice, Laws and Learning.

May we not forget how that profess'd Enemy of our Saviour, the Scourge of Christians, the Rod of God's Indignation, hath not only overthrown those glorious Countries, those Churches modeliz'd by the blessed Apostles and their Successors; but also cover'd them with Tartarian Darknes, *Mahomet's* Doctrine, the Alchoran Religion, and all this, (to our Shame be it spoken) through our Pride and Contention, so that (*Heu quo discordia cives perduxit Miseros*) may be now their Motto.

I question not but Peace is in the main Wishes of every Man, yet the Qualifications and Predispositions necessary thereto, are the Care of very few; for it is a Blessing that only attends the meek and humble. The Peace of Christ's Servants consists in steady Patience, in attending dilligently to his Words, and in following his Directions: To please him must be our chief, our only Concern, the Fruition of him our Ultimate, our only End and Desire.

We must (if we obtain this precious Jewel) rather comply with the Desires and Commands of others, than to indulge our own Inclinations; we must be humble, obedient and condescending in all, and every Deportment. It must be our constant Wishes and Prayers, that God would perform his own Pleasure, and dispose of us and all our Affairs as to him seems most convenient: And when once we have brought our selves to this Temper and Spirit, we may be sure we are in the ready way to Peace of Mind, and true Content.

Men might live quiet and easy enough, were they careful not to give themselves Trouble, and forbear meddling with what other People do or say, in which they are no way concerned: And indeed, who would in his Wits, take Pains, and spend much Time, to enquire into the Affairs of Neighbours, and Strangers altogether to him; and seldom or never descend into his own Breast, that he may examine and understand himself? Yet so foolish and impertinent are we, that while we trouble our selves with Nations and Kingdoms, States and Governments, our own chief Concerns are miserably neglected; that internal Peace which I have before demonstrated from the Text, and which constantly attends God's Saints and People.

But blessed is that Soul which will hear God the Lord thus speaking, and that shall feel the transporting Comforts of his gracious Words. Blessed are the Ears which, with a greedy Attention, drink in the
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soft and gentle Whispers of his Spirit, while they continue obstinately deaf to the treacherous Insinuations of this deluding World. Doubly blessed are they who hear the Sound of Truth, not only in the outward Administrations of the Word, but by the inward and familiar Communications and Motions of infused Grace. Blessed those Eyes which are shut to all Mundane Objects, and constantly wakeful to the Affairs of the Soul. Blessed are they whose sharper Sight enters deep into the secret and sublime Mysteries of Heavenly Truth; purged and prepared by spiritual Meditations, and daily Exercise of holy Duties. Blessed indeed are they who disengage themselves from all transitory Incumbrances, and have Opportunities of attending continually upon God alone.

Let us then consider this, (dear Souls) and shake off sensual Desires, which must be first abandoned, before we can listen with due Reverence and Attention to those things which the Lord God will speak: And O! what comfortable Words are they! I am thy Peace, thy Life, thy Salvation, and exceeding great Reward. *Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you,* Matth. 11. *Set your Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth,* Coloss. 3. *For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal,* 2 Cor. 4. What are all things here below, but dangerous and empty Delusions? And what could it profit a Man to gain, tho' it were all the Creatures, if he be forsaken and cast off by the Creator? In him alone is Pleasure, and Bliss, and Glory: Therefore may we let go those cheating Shadows, and embrace the only substantial Good; bid a final Adieu to the Deceits of the World, and place all our Love and Endeavours upon our God; for in his Service and Acceptance we shall attain the End of our Wishes, the Fruit of our Labours, solid Satisfaction, and true Happiness.

I will conclude therefore in the Words of the Epistle for the Day. *Rejoyce in the Lord alway, and again I say unto you rejoyce. Let your Moderation be known unto all Men; for the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God. And the Peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Christ Jesus.* Phil. Cap. 4. verse 4, to the end of verse 7.

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